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VEDÂNTA PHILOSOPHY

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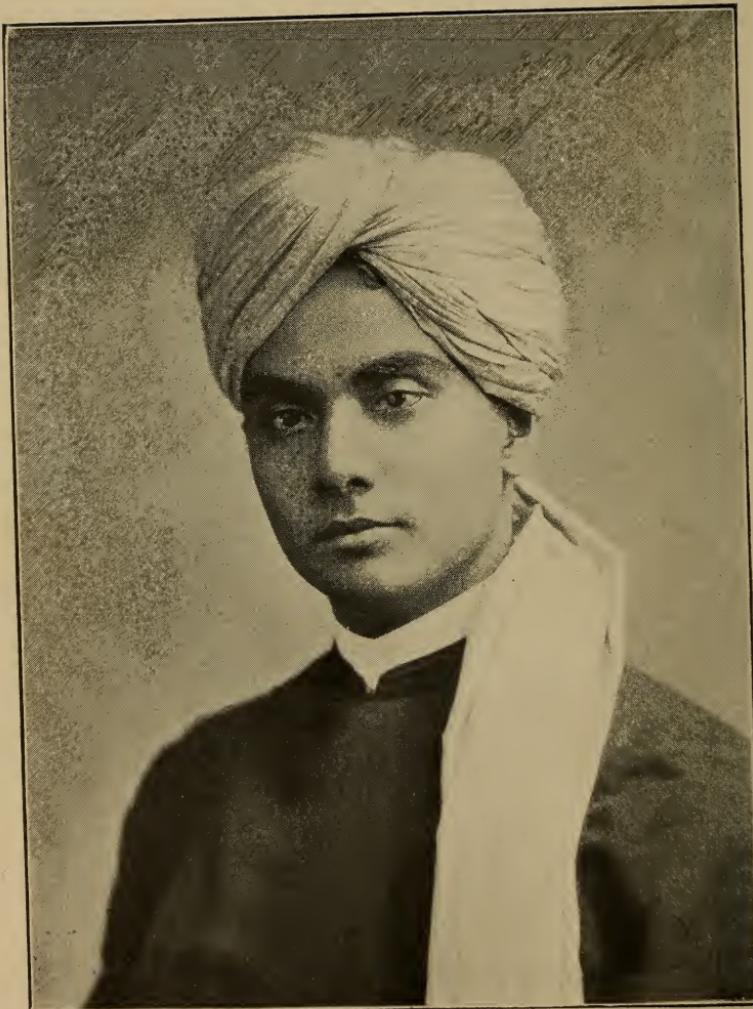
REINCARNATION

THREE LECTURES BY

SWÂMI ABHEDÂNANDA

OF INDIA

Published by the VEDĀNTA SOCIETY
New York



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THREE LECTURES

BY

SWĀMI ABHEDĀNANDA

ON

REINCARNATION

DELIVERED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE
VEDĀNTA SOCIETY, IN ASSEMBLY HALL,

NEW YORK, 1898-1899



Published by the VEDĀNTA SOCIETY
NEW YORK



FOR SALE BY
HENRY J. VAN HAAGEN, 1267, BROADWAY,
AND BOOKSELLERS GENERALLY

Price, 25 Cents



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NEW YORK

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REINCARNATION



VEDÂNTA PHILOSOPHY

REINCARNATION

I.

The visible phenomena of the universe are bound by the universal law of cause and effect. The effect is visible or perceptible, while the cause is invisible or imperceptible. The falling of an apple from a tree is the effect of a certain invisible force called gravitation. Although the force cannot be perceived by the senses, its expression is visible. All perceptible phenomena are but the various expressions of different forces which act as invisible agents upon the subtle and imperceptible forms of matter. These invisible agents or forces together with the imperceptible particles of matter make up the subtle states of the phenomenal universe. When a subtle force becomes objectified, it appears as a gross object. Therefore, we can say, that every gross form is an expression of some subtle force acting upon the subtle particles of matter. The minute particles of

hydrogen and oxygen when combined by chemical force, appear in the gross form of water. Water can never be separated from hydrogen and oxygen, which are its subtle component parts. Its existence depends upon that of its component parts, or in other words, upon its subtle form. If the subtle state changes, the gross manifestation will also change. The peculiarity in the gross form of a plant depends upon the peculiar nature of its subtle form, the seed. The peculiar nature of the gross forms in the animal kingdom depends upon the subtle forms which manifest variously in each of the intermediate stages between the microscopic unit of living matter and the highest man. Gross human body is closely related to its subtle body. Not only this, but every movement or change in the physical form is caused by the activity and change of the subtle body. If the subtle body be affected or changed a little, the gross body will also be affected similarly. The material body being the expression of the subtle body, its birth, growth, decay and death depend upon the changes of the subtle body. As long as the subtle body remains, it will continue to express itself in a corresponding gross form.

Now let us understand clearly what we mean by a subtle body. It is nothing but a minute germ of a living substance. It contains the invisible particles of matter which are held together by vital force, and it also possesses mind or thought-force in a potential state, just as a seed of a plant contains in it the life

force and the power of growth. According to Vedânta, the subtle body consists of *Antahkarana*, that is, the internal organ or the mind substance with its various modifications, the five instruments of perception: the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching; the five instruments of action such as the powers of seizing, moving, speaking and so forth, and the five *Prânas*. *Prâna* is a Sanskrit word which means vital energy or the life sustaining power in us. Although *Prâna* is one, it takes five different names on account of the five different functions it performs. This word *Prâna* includes the five manifestations of the vital force: First, that power which moves the lungs and draws the atmospheric air from without into the system. This is also called *Prâna*. Secondly, that power which throws out of the system such things which are not wanted. It is called in Sanskrit *Apâna*. Thirdly, it takes the name of *Samâna*, as performing digestive functions and carrying the extract of food to every part of the body. It is called *Udâna* when it is the cause of bringing down food from the mouth through the alimentary canal to the stomach and also when it is the cause of the power of talking. The fifth power of *Prâna* is that which works in every part of the system from head to foot, through every canal, which keeps the shape of the body, preserves it from putrefaction, and gives health and life to every cell and organ. These are the various manifestations of the vital force or *Prâna*. These subtle powers

together with the non-composite elements of the gross body, and also with the potentialities of all the impressions, ideas and tendencies which each individual gathers in one life, make up his subtle body. As a resultant of all the different actions of mind and body which an individual does in his present life, will be the tendencies and desires in his future. Nothing will be lost.

Every action of body or mind which we do, every thought which we think, becomes fine, and is stored up in the form of a *Sanskâra* or impression in our minds. It remains latent for some time, and then it rises up in the form of a mental wave and produces new desires. These desires are called in Vedânta, *Vâsanâs*. *Vâsanâs* or strong desires are the manufacturers of new bodies. If *Vâsanâ* or longing for worldly pleasures and objects remains in anybody, even after hundreds of births, that person will be born again. Nothing can prevent the course of strong desires. Desires must be fulfilled sooner or later.

Every voluntary or involuntary action of the body, sense or mind must correspond to the dormant impressions stored up in the subtle body. Although growth, the process of nourishment and all the changes of the gross physical body take place according to the necessarily acting causes, yet the whole series of actions, and consequently every individual act, the condition of the body which accomplishes it, nay, the whole process in and through which the body exists, are nothing but the outward expressions

of the latent impressions stored up in the subtle body. Upon these rests the perfect suitableness of the animal or human body, to the animal or human nature of one's impressions. The organs of the senses must therefore completely correspond to the principal desires which are the strongest and most ready to manifest. They are the visible expressions of these desires. If there be no hunger or desire to eat, teeth, throat and bowels will be of no use. If there be no desire for grasping and moving, hands and legs would be useless. Similarly it can be shown that the desire for seeing, hearing, etc., have produced the eye, ear, etc. If I have no desire to use my hand, and if I do not use it at all, within a few months it will wither away and die. In India there are some religious fanatics who hold up their arms and do not use them at all; after a few months their arms wither and become stiff and dead. A person who lies on his back for six months loses the power of walking. There are many such instances which prove the injurious effects of the disuse of our limbs and organs.

As the human form generally, corresponds to the human will generally, so the individual bodily structure corresponds to the character, desires, will and thought of the individual. Therefore the outer nature is nothing but the expression of the inner nature. This inner nature of each individual is what re-incarnates or expresses itself successively in various forms, one after another. When a man dies the

individual ego or Jîva (as it is called in Sanskrit), which means the germ of life or the living soul of man, is not destroyed, but it continues to exist in an invisible form. It remains like a permanent thread stringing together the separate lives by the law of cause and effect. The subtle body is like a water-globule which sprang in the beginningless past from the eternal ocean of reality; and it contains the reflection of the unchangeable light of Intelligence. As a water-globule remains sometime in an invisible vapory state in a cloud, then in rain or snow or ice, and again as steam or in mud, but is never destroyed, so the subtle body sometimes remains unmanifested and sometimes expresses itself in gross forms of animal or human beings, according to the desires and tendencies that are ready to manifest. It may go to heaven, that is, to some other planet, or it may be born again on this earth. It depends on the nature and strength of one's life-long tendencies and bent of mind. This idea is clearly expressed in Vedânta. "The thought, will or desire which is extremely strong during lifetime, will become predominant at the time of death and will mould the inner nature of the dying person. The newly moulded inner nature will express in a new form." The thought, will or desire which moulds the inner nature has the power of selecting conditions or environments which will help it in its way of manifestation. This process is expressed by the evolutionists as the law of "natural selection."

We shall be better able to understand that process by studying how the seeds of different trees select from the common environments different materials, and absorb and assimilate different quantities of elements. Suppose two seeds, one of an oak and the other of a chestnut, are planted in a pot. The power of growth in both the seeds is of the same nature. The environments, earth, water, heat and so forth are the same. But still there is some peculiarity in each of the seeds, which will absorb from the common environments different quantities of elements and other properties which are fit to help the growth of the peculiar nature and form of the fruit, flower, leaves of each tree. Suppose the chestnut is a horse-chestnut. If, under different conditions, the peculiar nature of the horse-chestnut changes into that of a sweet chestnut, then, along with the changes in the seed, the whole nature of the tree, leaves, fruits will be changed. It will no more attract, absorb or assimilate those substances and qualities of the environments which it did when it was a horse-chestnut. Similarly, through the law of "natural selection" the newly moulded thought-body of the dying person will choose and attract such parts from the common environments as are helpful to its proper expression or manifestation. Parents are nothing but the principal parts of the environment of the re-incarnating individual. The newly moulded inner nature or subtle body of the individual will by the law of "natural selection" choose, unconsciously

as it were, its suitable parents and will be born to them. As, for instance, if I have a strong desire to become an artist, and if, after a life-long struggle I do not succeed in being the greatest, after the death of the body, I will be born of such parents and with such environments as will help me to become the best artist.

The whole process is expressed in Eastern philosophy by the doctrine of the Reincarnation of the individual soul. Although this doctrine is commonly rejected in the West, it is unreservedly accepted by the vast majority of mankind of the present day, as it was in past centuries. The scientific explanation of this theory we find nowhere except in the writings of the Hindus, still we know that from very ancient times it was believed in by the philosophers, sages and prophets of different countries. The ancient civilization of Egypt was built upon the crude form of the doctrine of Reincarnation. Herodotus says: "The Egyptians propounded the theory that the human soul is imperishable, and that where the body of any one dies it enters into some other creature that may be ready to receive it." Pythagoras and his disciples spread it through Greece and Italy. Pythagoras says: "All has soul; all is soul wandering in the organic world, and obeying eternal will or law."

In Dryden's Ovid we read:—

" Death has no power the immortal soul to slay,
 That, when its present body turns to clay,
 Seeks a fresh home, and with unlessered might
 Inspires another frame with life and light."

It was the keynote of Plato's philosophy. Plato says: "Soul is older than body. Souls are continually born over again into this life." The idea of Reincarnation was spread widely in Greece and Italy by Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Virgil and Ovid. It was known to the Neo-Platonists, Plotinus and Proclus. Plotinus says: "The soul leaving the body becomes that power which it has most developed. Let us fly then from here below and rise to the intellectual world, that we may not fall into a purely sensible life by allowing ourselves to follow sensible images, etc." It was the fundamental principle of the religion of the Persian Magi. Alexander the Great accepted this idea after coming in contact with the Hindu philosophers. Julius Cæsar found that the Gauls had some belief regarding the pre-existence of the human soul. The Druids of old Gaul believed that the souls of men transmigrate into those bodies whose habits and characters they most resemble. Celts and Britons were impressed with this idea. It was a favorite theme of the Arab philosophers and many Mahomedan Sufis. The Jews adopted it after the Babylonian captivity. Philo of Alexandria who was a contemporary of Christ, preached amongst the Hebrews the Platonic idea of the pre-existence and rebirth of human souls. Philo says: "The company of disembodied souls is distributed in various orders. The law of some of them is to enter mortal bodies, and after certain prescribed periods be again set free." John the Baptist

was according to the Jews a second Elijah; Jesus was believed by many to be the re-appearance of some other prophet. (See Matt. xvi., 14, also xvii., 12.) Solomon says in his book of wisdom "I was a child of good nature and a good soul came to me, or rather because I was good I came into an undefiled body."

The Talmud and Kabala teach the same thing. In the Talmud it is said that Abel's soul passed into the body of Seth, and then into that of Moses. Christianity is not exempt from this idea. Origen and other church fathers believed in it. Origen says: "For God justly disposing of his creatures according to their desert, united the diversities of minds in one congruous world, that he might, as it were, adorn his mansion (in which ought to be not only vases of gold and silver, but of wood also and clay, and some to honor and some to dishonor) with these diverse vases, minds or souls. To these causes the world owes its diversity, while Divine Providence disposes each according to his tendency, mind and disposition." He also says: "I think this is a question how it happens that the human mind is influenced now by the good, now by the evil. The causes of this I suspect to be more ancient than this corporeal birth." The idea of Reincarnation spread so fast amongst the Christians that Justinian was obliged to suppress it by passing a law in the Council of Constantinople in A. D. 538. The law was this: "Whoever shall support the mythical presentation

of the pre-existence of the soul, and the consequently wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema." The Gnostics and Manichæans propagated the tenets of Reincarnation amongst the mediæval sects called Bogomiles, Paulicians, and so forth. Some of the followers of this so-called erroneous belief were cruelly persecuted in 385, A. D.

In the seventeenth century some of the Cambridge Platonists, as Dr. Henry More and others, accepted the idea of rebirth. Most of the German philosophers of the middle ages and of recent days have advocated and upheld this doctrine. Many quotations can be given from the writings of great thinkers, as Kant, Scotus, Schelling, Fichte, Leibnitz, Schopenhaur, Giardano Bruno, Goethe, Lessing, Herder and a host of others. The great skeptic Hume says in his posthumous essay on "The Immortality of the Soul," "The metempsychosis is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can harken to." Scientists like Flammarion and Huxley have supported this doctrine of Reincarnation. Professor Huxley says: "None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality." ('Evolution and Ethics', p. 61.)

Some of the theological leaders have preached it. The eminent German theologian Dr. Julius Müller supports this theory in his work on "The Christian Doctrine of Sin." Prominent theologians such as

Dr. Dorner, Ernesti, Rückert, Edward Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, preached many a time touching the question of the pre-existence and rebirth of the individual soul. Swedenborg and Emerson maintained it. Emerson says in his essay on Experience, "We wake and find ourselves on a stair. There are stairs below us which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight."

Almost all of the poets, ancient or modern, profess it. William Wordsworth says in "Intimations of Immortality"—

"The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar."

Tennyson writes in the "Two Voices."

"Or, if through lower lives I came—
Tho' all experience past became,
Consolidate in mind and frame—
I might forget my weaker lot;
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not."

Walt Whitman says in "Leaves of Grass."

"As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before."

Similar passages can be quoted from almost all the poets of different countries. Even amongst the aboriginal tribes of Africa, Asia, North and South America, traces of this belief in the rebirth of souls is to be found. Nearly three-fourths of the popula-

tion of Asia believe in the doctrine of Reincarnation and through it they find a satisfactory explanation of the problem of life. There is no religion which denies the continuity of the individual soul after death.

Those who do not believe in Reincarnation, try to explain the world of inequalities and diversities either by asserting that the omnipotent will of God has made these inequalities or by the theory of hereditary transmission. Neither of these theories, however, is sufficient to explain the inequalities that we meet with in our everyday life. If omnipotent personal God created this universe out of nothing, could he not make all things good and all beings happy ? If God creates each individual soul before its birth why does He make one happy and another unhappy ? Why is one man or woman born with good tendencies and another with evil ones ? Why is one man virtuous throughout his life and another bestial ? Why is one born intelligent and another idiotic ? If God out of His own will made all these inequalities, or, in other words, if God created one man to suffer and another to enjoy, then how partial and unjust must He be ! He must be worse than a tyrant. How can we worship Him, how call Him merciful and just ?

Some people try to save God from this charge of partiality and injustice by saying that all good things of this universe are the work of God, and all evil things are the work of a demon or Satan. God

created everything good, but it was Satan who brought evil into this world and made everything bad. Now let us see how far such a statement is logically correct. Good and evil are two relative terms; the existence of one depends upon that of the other. Good cannot exist without evil, and evil cannot exist without being related to good. When God created what we call good, He must have created evil at the same time, otherwise He could not create good alone. If the creator of evil, call him by whatever name you like, had brought evil into this world, he must have created it simultaneously with God; otherwise it would have been impossible for God to create good, which can exist only as related to evil. As such they will have to admit that the Creators of good and evil sat together at the same time to create this world, which is a mixture of good and evil. Consequently, both of them are equally powerful, and limited by each other. Therefore neither of them is infinite in powers or omnipotent. So we cannot say that the Almighty God of the universe created good alone and not the evil.

The argument which the supporters of the theory of hereditary transmission advance, does not explain satisfactorily the cause of the inequalities and diversities of this universe. Why is it that the children of the same parents show marked dissimilarity to their parents and to each other? Why do twins develop into dissimilar characters and possess

opposite qualities, although they are born of the same parents at the same time and brought up under similar conditions and environments? How can heredity explain such cases? Suppose a man has five children; one is honest and good, another is an idiot, the third becomes a murderer, the fourth goes to church and is devotional and the fifth is a cripple and diseased. Who made these dissimilarities? They cannot be accidents. There is no such thing as an accident. Every event of the universe is bound by the law of cause and effect. There must be some cause of these inequalities. Who made one honest and good, and another an idiot, and so forth? Parents? That cannot be. They never dreamed that they would beget a murderer or a villain or an idiot. On the other hand, almost all parents wish their children to be the best and happiest. But in spite of their desires they get such children. Why? What is the cause? Does the theory of heredity explain it? No, not at all. In the first place, there is a great dispute amongst the advocates of the heredity theory whether or not one inherits the acquired characters of the parents. Dr. August Weismann and the followers of his school deny that the hereditary tendencies of the parents predominate in one, of the grandfather in another, those of the grandmother in the third, while the tendencies of the great-grandfather or of the great-great-grandmother in the fourth, and so on. But Weismann says that the acquired characters are never inherited. The indi-

vidual inequalities are caused by the differences of germ-cells. He believes in the "continuity of the germ-plasm." We will be able to understand his theory better from the following quotations, which give his own words. He says, "I have called this substance 'germ-plasm,' and have assumed that it possesses a highly complex structure, conferring upon it the power of developing into a complex organism." (Weismann on "Heredity," Vol. I., p. 170.) Again he says: "There is, therefore, continuity of the germ-plasm from one generation to another. One might represent the germ-plasm by the metaphor of a long, creeping root-stock from which plants arise at intervals, these latter representing the individuals of successive generations. Hence it follows that the transmission of acquired characters is an impossibility, for if the germ-plasm is not formed anew in each individual, but is derived from that which preceded it, its structure, and above all, its molecular constitution, cannot depend upon the individual in which it happens to occur, but such an individual only forms, as it were, the nutritive soil at the expense of which germ-plasm grows, while the latter possessed its characteristic structure from the beginning, viz. : before the commencement of growth. But the tendencies of heredity, of which the germ-plasm is the bearer, depend upon this very molecular structure, and hence only those characters can be transmitted through successive generations which have been previously inherited,

viz.: those characters which were potentially contained in the structure of the germ-plasm. It also follows that those other characters which have been acquired by the influence of special external conditions, during the life-time of the parent, cannot be transmitted at all." (Vol. I., p. 273.) In conclusion, Weismann writes: "But at all events we have gained this much, that the only facts which appear to directly prove a transmission of acquired characters have been refuted, and that the only firm foundation on which this hypothesis has been hitherto based, has been destroyed." (Vol. I., p. 461.)

Thus Dr. Weismann has subverted the old theory of heredity, and has pushed it so far that it has come almost to the door of the doctrine of Reincarnation. According to Weismann's theory, the character of each of those five children is not the result of a hereditary transmission, but a manifestation of "those characters which were potentially contained in the structure of the germ-plasm." Secondly, if this be the case, the question arises, where did the potential characters or tendencies of the germ-plasm originally come from? Weismann's answer is "from the common stock." But what and where that common stock is, Dr. Weismann does not tell us, so the solution is only half satisfactory.

Vedânta explains this difficulty by saying that each of these germ-plasms or bioplasms is but a reincarnating subtle body, containing potentially all the

experiences, characters, tendencies and desires which one had in one's previous life. At the time of death the individual soul contracts and remains in the form of a germ of life. It is for this reason, Vedānta teaches, that it is neither the will of God nor the fault of the parents that has formed the characters of those children, but each child is responsible for its tendencies, capacities, powers and character. It is its own "Karma" or past actions that make a child a murderer or a saint, virtuous or sinful. The stored-up potentialities in a subtle body manifest in the character of an individual. The doctrine of Reincarnation alone can explain most satisfactorily and rationally many instances of uncommon powers and genius displayed in childhood. The theory of heredity has up to this time failed to give any good reason for them. Why is it that Pascal, when twelve years old, succeeded in discovering for himself the greater part of plane geometry. How could the shepherd Mangiamelo, when five years old, calculate like an arithmetical machine. Think of the child Zerah Colburn. When he was under eight years of age he could solve the most tremendous mathematical problems instantly and without using any figures. "In one instance he took the number 8 and raised it up progressively to the sixteenth power and instantly mentioned the result which contained 15 figures—281, 474, 976, 710, 656." Of course he was right in every figure. Asked the square root of numbers consisting of six

figures, he would state the result instantly with perfect accuracy. He used to give the cube root of numbers in the hundreds of millions, the very moment when it was asked. Somebody asked him once how many minutes were there in 48 years, he answered, 25,288,800, and so on.

Mozart, the great musician, wrote a sonata when he was four years old and an opera in his eighth year. Theresa Milanolla played the violin with such skill that many people thought that she must have played before her birth. There are many such instances of wonderful powers exhibited by artists and painters when they were quite young. Sankarâcharya, the great commentator of the Vedânta philosophy, finished his commentary when he was twelve years old. How can such cases be explained by the theory of hereditary transmission. Joseph Hofmann showed wonderful genius and complete mastery of the piano when he was ten years old. When they were quite young, Homer, Plato, Shakespere, Beethoven, Raphael, showed extraordinary powers which could not be traced back to any members of their ancestral line. No other theory than the doctrine of Reincarnation can explain satisfactorily the causes which produce genius and prodigies.

Another argument which the Vedântists advance in support of the theory of Reincarnation is that "Nothing is destroyed in the universe." Destruction in the sense of the annihilation of a thing is unknown to the Vedântic philosophers, just as it is unknown to

the modern scientists. They say “non-existence can never become existence and existence can never become non-existence;” or, in other words, that which did not exist can never exist, and conversely that which exists in any form can never become non-existent. This is the law of nature. As such, the impressions or ideas which we now have, together with the powers which we possess, will not be destroyed but will remain with us in some form or other. Our bodies may change, but the powers, Karma, Sanskāras or impressions and the materials which manufactured our bodies must remain in us in an unmanifested form. They will never be destroyed. Again science tells us that that which remains in an unmanifested or potential state must at some time or other be manifested in a kinetic or actual form. Therefore we shall get other bodies, sooner or later. It is for this reason said in the “Bhagavad Gītā”—“Birth must be followed by death and death must be followed by birth.” Such a continuously recurring series of births and deaths each germ of life must go through.

One objection that is often raised against the doctrine of Reincarnation is this: If we had previous births, why do not we remember them? This question prevents many people from accepting this doctrine. But they do not realize that even during our life-time we forget many things which we did in our infancy or childhood. I do not remember what I did when I was a baby, but shall I deny my exis-

tence as a baby? Certainly not. Do you remember what you did on the afternoon of the 24th of March, 1887? Certainly, you do not. Would you say that you did not exist on that day because you do not recall it? That cannot be. Our memories are very poor and imperfect. If we can recall to our minds all the thoughts, ideas we had in our infancy and all the dreams which we dreamed at that time, then it will be quite easy to remember correctly what we were before. There are instances of Yogis who do recollect their past lives and can tell those of others too, and they can be verified in many ways. The Yogis know how to develop memory and how to read past lives. They say, time and space exist in relation to our present mental condition; if we can rise above this plane, our higher mind sees the past and future just as we see things before our eyes. Buddha remembered many of his past births. Those who wish to satisfy the idle curiosity of their mind may spend their energy by trying to recollect their past lives. But I think it would be much more helpful to us if we devote our time and energy in moulding our future and in trying to be better than we are now, because the recollection of our former condition would only force us to make a bad use of the present. How unhappy he must be who knows that the wicked deeds of his past life would surely react on him and would bring distress, misery, unhappiness or suffering within a few days or few months. Such a man would be so

restless and unhappy that he would not be able to do any work properly ; he would constantly think in what form misery would appear to him and so forth. He would not be able to eat or sleep even. He would be most miserable. Therefore we ought to think that it is a great blessing that we do not recollect our past lives, and past deeds. Vedânta says, do not waste your valuable time in thinking of your past lives, do not look backward during the tiresome journey through the different stages of evolution, always look forward and try first to attain to the highest point of spiritual development; then if you want to know your past lives you will recollect them all. Nothing will remain unknown to you, the Knower of the universe. When the all-knowing Divine mind will manifest through you, time and space will vanish and past and future will be changed into the eternal present. Then you will say as Sri Krisna said to Arjuna, in the "Bhagavad Gîtâ":—

"Both you and I have passed through many lives; you do not recollect any, but I know them all." (Ch. iv., 5.)

EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION

II.

The amazing achievements of modern science have been opening every day new gates of wisdom and slowly bringing human minds nearer and nearer to the ultimate reality of the universe. The fire of knowledge kindled by science has already burnt down many dogmas and beliefs held sacred by the superstition of the past, which stood in the way of truth-seeking minds. In the first place science has disproved the theory of the creation of the universe out of nothing by the action of some supernatural power. It has shown that the universe did not appear in its present form or come into existence all of a sudden only a few thousand years ago, but that it has taken ages to pass through different stages before it could reach its present condition. Each of these stages was directly related to a previous stage by the law of causation, which always operates in accordance with definite rules. The phenomena of the universe, according to science, are subject to evolution, or gradual change and progressive development from a relatively uniform condition to a relative complexity. From the greatest solar system down to the smallest blade of grass, everything in the universe has taken

its present shape and form through this cosmic process of evolution. Our planet earth has gradually evolved, perhaps out of a nebulous mass which existed at first in a gaseous state. The sun, moon, stars, satellites and other planets have come into existence by going through innumerable changes produced by the evolutionary process of the Cosmos. Through the same process plants, insects, fishes, reptiles, birds, animals, man, and all living matter that inhabits this earth have evolved from minute germs of life into their present forms. The theory of Evolution says that man did not come into existence all of a sudden, but is related to lower animals and to plants, either directly or indirectly. The germ of life had passed through various stages of physical form before it could appear as a man. That branch of science which is called Embryology has proved the fact that "man is the epitome of the whole creation." It tells that the human body before its birth passes through all the different stages of the animal kingdom—such as the polyp, fish, reptile, dog, ape, and at last, man. If we remember that nature is always consistent, that her laws are uniform and that whatever exists in the microcosm exists also in the macrocosm, and then study nature, we shall find that all the germs of life which exist in the universe are bound to pass through stages resembling the embryonic types before they can appear in the form of man.

In explaining the theory of Evolution, science says

that there are two principal factors in the process of evolution; the first is the tendency to vary, which exists in all living forms whether vegetable or animal; the second is the tendency of environment to influence that variation, either favorably or unfavorably. Without the first, evolution of any kind would be absolutely impossible. But the cause of that innate tendency to vary is still unknown to science. Upon the second depends the law of natural selection. The variation must be adapted to favorable conditions of life; consequently, either the germ of life will select suitable environments or vary itself in order to suit the surrounding conditions, if they are unfavorable. But the agent of this selective process is the struggle for existence which is a no less important factor. Thus Evolution depends on these three laws: Tendency to vary, or variation, natural selection, and struggle for existence. Science tries to explain through these three laws the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution of mankind. But the theory of Evolution will remain unintelligible until science can trace the cause of that innate "tendency to vary" which exists in every stage of all living forms.

If we study closely we find that man's "self" consists of two natures, one animal and the other moral or spiritual. Animal nature includes all the animal propensities, desire for sense enjoyments, love of self, fear of death and struggle for existence. Each of these is to be found in lower animals as well

as in human beings, the difference being only in degree and not in kind. In a savage tribe the expression of this animal nature is simple and natural while in a highly civilized nation it is expressed not in a simple and straightforward manner, but in an artistic and refined way. In a civilized community the same nature working through varied device, policy and plan, brings the same results in a more polished form. In the struggle for existence amongst lower animals and savage tribes, those who are physically strong survive and gain advantage over those who are physically weak; while in the civilized world the same result is obtained, not by displaying physical force but by art, diplomacy, policy, strategy and skill. Various kinds of defensive and offensive weapons have been invented to conquer those who are less skillful in using them, although they may be physically stronger. The simple expression of animal nature which we notice in savages and lower animals, by the natural process of evolution has gradually become more and more complex, as we find in the civilized nations of the world. The energy of the lower human nature is spent chiefly in the struggle for material existence.

But there is another nature in man which is higher than this. It expresses itself in various ways, but on a higher plane. Love of truth, mastery over passion, control of the senses, disinterested self-sacrifice, mercy and kindness to all creatures, desire to help the distressed, forgiveness, faith in a Supreme

Being and devotion; all these are the expressions of that higher moral and spiritual nature. They cannot be explained as developed from animal nature by means of the struggle for material existence. For these qualities are not to be found in lower animals, although the struggle for existence is there. The moral and spiritual nature of human beings cannot be traced as the outgrowth or gradual development of the animal nature. There is a dispute among the Evolutionists as to the method of explaining their cause. Some say that these higher faculties have evolved out of the lower ones and have developed by variation and natural selection; while others hold that some other higher influence, law or agency is required to account for them.

Professor Huxley says: "As I have already urged, the practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct, which in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion, it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside or treading down all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence. It demands that each man who enters into the enjoyment of the advantages of a polity shall be mindful of his debt to those who have

laboriously constructed it, and shall take heed that no act of his weakens the fabric in which he has been permitted to live. Laws and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process, and reminding the individual of his duty to the community, to the protection and influence of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life of something better than a brutal savage." ('Evolution and Ethics', pp. 81-82.)

Prof. Calderwood says: "So far as human organism is concerned, there seem no overwhelming obstacles to be encountered by an evolution theory, but it seems impossible under such a theory to account for the appearance of the thinking, self-regulating life distinctly human." Thus, according to some of the best thinkers, the explanation of the moral and spiritual nature of man as a development of the animal nature, is quite insufficient and unsatisfactory. The theory of natural selection in the struggle for existence cannot explain the cause of the higher nature of man. We cannot say that a theory is complete because it explains many facts. On the other hand, if it fails to explain a single fact, then it is proved to be incomplete. As such, the theory that cannot explain satisfactorily the cause of the moral and spiritual nature of man can not be accepted as a complete theory. That explanation will be considered as complete which will explain most satisfactorily all the various manifestation of the animal, moral and spiritual nature.

Moreover, supposing the "tendency to vary" has evolved into the moral and spiritual nature of man, science does not explain the cause of that tendency to vary, nor how animal nature can be transformed into moral and spiritual nature. Is that "tendency to vary" indefinite, or is it limited by any definite law? Science does not say anything about it.

The explanation of the theologians, that the spiritual nature has been superadded to the animal nature by some extra-cosmic spiritual agency is not scientific, nor does it appeal to our reason.

Now let us see what Vedânta has to say on this point. Vedânta accepts evolution and admits the laws of variation and natural selection, but goes a step beyond modern science by explaining the cause of that "tendency to vary." It says, "there is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning." It is a law which governs the process of evolution as well as the law of causation. If we admit this grand truth of nature, then it will not be difficult to explain by the theory of evolution the gradual manifestation of the higher nature of man. The tendency of scientific monism is towards that end.

Some of the modern scientists who hold the monistic position have found out the same truth which was discovered long ago by the Vedântic philosophers in India. J. Arthur Thomson, an eminent English scientist of the present day, says, in "The Study of Animal Life," that "the world is one, not two-fold, the spiritual influx is the primal reality and there

is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning." But the evolutionists do not accept this truth. Let us understand it clearly. It means that that which existed potentially at the time of the beginning of evolution has gradually manifested in the various stages and grades of evolution. If we admit that a unicellular germ of life or a bioplasm, after passing through various stages of evolution, has ultimately manifested in the form of a highly developed human being, then we shall have to admit the potentiality of all the manifested powers in that germ or bioplasm, because the law is "that which exists in the end existed also in the beginning." The animal nature, higher nature, mind, intellect, spirit, all these exist potentially in the germ of life. If we do not admit this law then the problem will arise : How can non-existence become existent ? How can something come out of nothing ? How can that come into existence which did not exist before ? Each germ of life, according to Vedānta, possesses infinite potentialities and infinite possibilities. The powers that remain latent have the natural tendency to manifest perfectly and to become actual. In their attempt they vary according to the surrounding environments, selecting suitable conditions or remaining latent as long as circumstances do not favor them. Therefore variation, according to Vedānta, is caused by this attempt of the potential powers to become actual. When life and mind began to evolve, the possibilities of action and reaction

hitherto latent in the germ of life became real and all things became, in a sense, new. Nobody can imagine the amount of latent power which a minute germ of life possesses until it expresses in gross form on the physical plane. By seeing the seed of a Banyan tree, one who has never seen the tree cannot imagine what powers lie dormant in it. When a baby is born, we cannot tell whether he will be a great saint, or a wonderful artist, or a philosopher, or an idiot, or a villain of the worst type. Parents know nothing about his future. Along with his growth, certain latent powers gradually begin to manifest. Those which are the strongest and most powerful will overcome others and check their course for some time; but when the powers that remain subdued by stronger ones get favorable conditions they will appear in manifested forms. As, for instance, chemical forces may slumber in matter for a thousand years, but when the contact with the re-agents sets them free, they appear again and produce certain results. For thousands of years galvanism slumbered in copper and zinc, which lay quietly beside silver. As soon as all three are brought together under the required conditions silver is consumed in flame. A dry seed of a plant may preserve the slumbering power of growth through two or three thousand years and then reappear under favorable conditions. Sir G. Wilkinson, the great archæologist, found some grains of wheat in a hermetically sealed vase in a grave at Thebes, which

must have lain there for three thousand years. When Mr. Pettigrew sowed them they grew into plants. Some vegetable roots found in the hands of an Egyptian mummy, which must have been at least two thousand years old, were planted in a flower-pot, and they grew and flourished. Thus, whenever the latent powers get favorable conditions, they manifest according to their nature, even after thousands of years.

Similarly, there are many instances of slumbering mental powers. After remaining dormant for a long period in our normal condition, they may, in certain abnormal states—such as madness, delirium, catalepsy, hypnotic sleep and so forth—flash out into luminous consciousness and throw into absolute oblivion the powers that are manifesting in the normal state. Talents for eloquence, music, painting, and uncommon ingenuity in several mechanical arts, traces of which were never found in the ordinary normal condition, are often evolved in the state of madness. Somnambulists in deep sleep, have solved most difficult mathematical problems and performed various acts with results which have surprised them in their normal waking states. Thus we can understand that each individual mind is the storehouse of many powers, various impressions and ideas, some of which manifest in our normal state, while others remain latent. Our present condition of mind and body is nothing but the manifested form of certain dormant powers that exist in ourselves. If new

powers are roused up and begin to manifest the whole nature will be changed into a new form. The manifestation of latent powers is at the bottom of the evolution of one species into another. This idea has been expressed in a few words by Patanjali, the great Hindu evolutionist who lived long before the Christian era.* In the second aphorism of the fourth chapter (see 'Râja Yoga,' by Swâmi Vivekânanda, p. 210) it is said, "The Evolution into another species is caused by the in-filling of nature." The nature is filled not from without but from within. Nothing is superadded to the individual soul from outside. The germs are already there, but their development depends upon their coming in contact with the necessary conditions requisite for proper manifestation. We sometimes see a wicked man suddenly become saintlike. There are instances of murderers and robbers becoming saints. A religionist will explain the cause of their sudden change, by saying that the grace of the Almighty had fallen upon them and transformed their whole nature. But Vedânta says that the

*The reader ought to know that the doctrine of Evolution was known in India long before the Christian era. About the 7th century, B. C., Kapila, the father of Hindu Evolutionists, explained this theory for the first time through logic and science.

Sir Monier Monier Williams says: "Indeed if I may be allowed the anachronism, the Hindus were Spinozites more than 2,000 years before the existence of Spinoza; and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and Evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like Evolution existed in any language of the world." (P. 12, 'Hinduism and Brahminism.') Prof. Huxley says: "To say nothing of Indian Sages to whom Evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born." (P. 150, 'Science and Hebrew Tradition.')"

moral and spiritual powers that remained latent in them have been roused up, and the result is the sudden transformation. None can tell when or how the slumbering powers will wake up and begin to manifest. The germ of life, or the individual soul as it is ordinarily called, possesses infinite possibilities. Each germ of life is studying, as it were, the book of its own nature by unfolding one page after another. When it has gone through all the pages, or, in other words, all the stages of evolution, perfect knowledge is acquired, and its course is finished. We have read our lower nature by turning each page, or, in other words, by passing through each stage of animal life from the minutest bioplasm up to the present stage of existence. Now we are studying the pages which deal with moral and spiritual laws. If any one wants to read any page over again he will do it. Just as in reading a book, if anybody feels particularly interested in any page or chapter he will read it over and over again and will not open a new page or a new chapter until he is perfectly satisfied with it. Similarly, in reading the book of life, if the individual soul likes any particular stage, he will stay there until he is perfectly satisfied with it; after that he will go forward and study other pages. One may read very slowly, and another very fast; but whether we read slowly or rapidly each one of us is bound to read the whole book of nature and attain to perfection sooner or later.

According to Vedânta, the end and aim of Evolution is the attainment of perfection. Physical evolution of animal life reached its perfection in human form. There cannot be any other form higher than human on this earth under present conditions. It is the perfection of animal form. From this we can infer that the tendency of the law of Evolution is to reach perfection. When it is attained to, the whole purpose is served. Do we see in nature any other higher form evolved out of the human body? No. Shall we not be justified if we say that the end of physical evolution is the attainment of the perfection of animal form. Again as the purpose and method of natural laws are uniform throughout the universe, the end of intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution will be attained when intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection are acquired. Intellectual perfection means perfection of intellect; and intellect is perfect when we understand the true nature of things and never mistake the unreal for the real, matter for spirit, non-eternal for eternal, or vice versa. Moral perfection consists in the destruction of selfishness; and spiritual perfection is the manifestation of the true nature of spirit which is immortal, free, divine and one with the Universal Spirit or God. Evolution attains to the highest fulfilment of its purpose when the spirit manifests perfectly. The tendency of nature is to have perfect manifestation of all her powers. When certain powers predominate they manifest first while the

others remain dormant. As we find in the process of evolution, when animal nature manifests perfectly the moral and spiritual nature remain latent. Again when moral and spiritual nature manifest fully, the animal is in abeyance. It is for this reason we do not find expressions of moral and spiritual nature in lower animals or in those human beings who live like them. Man is the only animal in whom such perfect expressions of moral and spiritual nature are possible.

When the individual soul begins to study its spiritual nature, its lower or animal nature is gradually eclipsed. As the higher nature becomes powerful the lower nature dwindles into insignificance; its energy is transformed into that of the higher nature, and ultimately it disappears altogether and rises no more. Then the soul becomes free from the lower or animal nature. There are many stages in the higher nature, as well as in the lower. Each of these stages binds the individual soul so long as it stays there. As it rises on a higher plane the lower stages disappear and cease to bind. But the moment any individual, after passing through all the stages of the spiritual nature, reaches the ultimate point of perfection, he realizes his true nature which is immortal and divine. Then his true individuality manifests. For want of true knowledge, he identified himself with each stage successively and thought that his individuality was one with the powers which were manifested in each stage. Con-

sequently he thought by mistake that he was affected by the changes of each stage. But now he realizes that his real individuality always remained unaffected. He sees that his true individuality shines always in the same manner although the limiting adjuncts may vary. As the light of a lamp appears of different colors if it passes through glasses of different colors, so the light of the true individual appears as animal or human when it passes through the animal or human nature of the subtle body. The subtle body of an individual changes from animal nature through moral and spiritual into divine. As this gradual growth cannot be expected in one life we shall have to admit the doctrine of Reincarnation, which teaches gradual evolution of the germ of life or the individual soul through many lives and various forms. Otherwise the theory of Evolution will remain imperfect, incomplete and purposeless. The doctrine of Reincarnation differs from the accepted theory of Evolution in admitting a gradual but continuous evolution of the subtle body through many gross forms. The gross body may appear or disappear, but the subtle body continues to exist even after the dissolution of the gross body and re-manifests in some other form.

The doctrine of Reincarnation when properly understood will appear as a supplement to the theory of Evolution. Without this most important supplement the Evolution theory will never be complete and perfect. Evolution explains the process of life,

while Reincarnation explains the purpose of life. Therefore, both must go hand in hand to make the explanation satisfactory in every respect.

James Freeman Clarke says: "That man has come up to his present state of development by passing through lower forms, is the popular doctrine of science to-day. What is called Evolution teaches that we have reached our present state by a very long and gradual ascent from the lowest animal organizations. It is true that the Darwinian theory takes no notice of the evolution of the soul, but only of the body. But it appears to me that a combination of the two views would remove many difficulties which still attach to the theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. If we are to believe in Evolution let us have the assistance of the soul itself in this development of new species. Thus science and philosophy will co-operate, nor will poetry hesitate to lend her aid." (P. 190, 'Ten Great Religions,' II.) Evolution of the body depends upon the evolution of the germ of life or the individual soul. When these two are combined the explanation becomes perfect.

The theory of Reincarnation is a logical necessity for the completion of the theory of evolution. If we admit a continuous evolution of a unit of the germ of life through many gross manifestations then we unconsciously accept the teachings of the doctrine of Reincarnation. In passing through different forms and manifestations the unit of life does not lose its

identity or individuality. As an atom does not lose its identity or individuality (if you allow me to suppose an atom has a kind of individuality) although it passes from the mineral, through the vegetable, into the animal, so the germ of life always preserves its identity or individuality although it passes through the different stages of evolution.

Therefore it is said in "Bhagavad Gîtâ," as in our ordinary life the individual soul passes from a baby body to a young one and from a young to an old, and carries with it all the impressions, ideas and experience that it has gathered in its former stage of existence and reproduces them in proper time, so when a man dies the individual soul passes from an old body into a new one, and takes with it the subtle body wherein are stored up all that it experienced and gathered during its past incarnations. Knowing this, wise men are never afraid of death. They know that death is nothing but a mere change from one body into another. Therefore, if any one does not succeed in conquering the lower nature by the higher, he will try again in his next incarnation, after starting from the point which he reached in his past life. He will not begin again from the very beginning, but from the last stage at which he arrived. Thus we see that Reincarnation is the logical sequence of evolution. It completes and makes perfect that theory and explains the cause of the moral and spiritual nature of man.

WHICH IS SCIENTIFIC—RESURRECTION OR REINCARNATION ?

III.

Historically, it is interesting to know where the idea of resurrection first arose and how it was adopted by other nations. If we read carefully the writings ascribed to Moses and other writers of the Old Testament we find that the ancient Israelites did not believe in the Christian heaven or hell, nor in reward or punishment after death. It is doubtful whether they had any clear conception of the existence of soul after the dissolution of the human body. They had no definite idea of the hereafter. They did not believe in the resurrection either of the soul or body. Job longed for death thinking that this would end his mental agony. In Psalms we read “Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?” (Ps. lxxxviii, 10.) “In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who shall give Thee thanks.” (Ps. vi, 5.) Again (Ps. cxlvi, 4) it is said about princes and the son of man,—“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.” “The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.” (Ps. cxv, 17.)

Solomon speaks boldly: "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean and to the unclean * * * as is the good, so is the sinner." (Eccl. ix, 2.) "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. * * * Live joyfully with thy wife * * * for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccl. ix, 7, 9, 10.) Again in verse 5 it is said, "The dead know not anything, neither have they anymore a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten." Solomon says, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." "All go into one place; all are of the dust and all turn to dust again." "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (Eccl. iii, 19-21.) There are many such passages which show clearly that before the Babylonian captivity the Israelites had no belief in reward or punishment, neither in heaven nor hell nor in the resurrection of the soul. Some say that they had a belief in a sheol or pit where departed souls remained after death, but were never resurrected. But when the ancient Jews were conquered by the Persians, 536, B. C., they came in contact with a nation which had developed a belief in one God, in a heaven and a hell, in the resurrection of the

dead, in reward and punishment after death, and in the last day of judgment. Under the dominion of Persia, whose rule began with the capture of Babylon and lasted from 536-333, B. C., the Jews were greatly influenced by the Persian religion. They gave up their idolatry, gradually developed social organization and had considerable liberty. About that time the Jews were divided into two classes, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Those who adopted the religious ideas of the Parsees were called Pharisees (according to some authorities the word Pharisee was the Hebrew form of Parsee), and those who followed strictly the Jewish ideas, ceremonies, rituals and beliefs were called Sadducees. The former were sharply opposed to the latter in their doctrinal beliefs. They believed in angels and spirits, they expected the resurrection of the dead and believed in future reward and punishment and also in Divine pre-ordination. The Sadducees did not step beyond the bounds of ancient Judaism. They were Orthodox and very conservative in their views. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and reward and punishment after death. In Matt. xxii, 23, we read, "The same day came to him the Sadducees which say that there is no resurrection." The Sadducees were fewer in number than the Pharisees. Gradually the latter grew very powerful and after the death of Jesus their doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, and of reward and punishment after death, and the belief in angels and

spirits, became the cardinal principles of the new Christian sect.

Thus we see that the idea of resurrection first arose in Persia and afterwards took a prominent place in the writings of the New Testament, and since then it has been largely accepted by the Christians of the Western countries. The Zoroastrians believed that the soul of the dead hovers about the body for three nights and does not depart for the other world until the dawn after the third night. Then the righteous go to heaven and the wicked to hell. There the wicked remain until the time of renovation of the universe, that is, the judgment day. After the renovation, when Ahriman or Satan is killed, the souls of the wicked will be purified and have everlasting progress.* The question was asked, "How shall they produce resurrection?" Ahura Mazda says: "The reply is this, that the preparation and production of the resurrection are an achievement connected with miracle, a sublimity, and afterwards also a wondrous appearance unto the creatures uninformed. The secrets and affairs of the persistent Creator are like every mystery and secret."†

The Zoroastrians believed in the resurrection, not of the physical body, but of the soul, and that it was an act of miracle. Similarly miraculous was the resurrection of Jesus. Although Jesus Himself never

* "Sacred Books of the East," Vol. xvii, pp. 27, 34, 46.

† "Sacred Books of the East," Vol. xvii, p. 80.

mentioned what kind of resurrection, whether of body or of soul that He meant and believed in, the interpretation of the writers of the Gospels shows that His disciples understood Him to mean bodily resurrection and the re-appearance of His physical form. The three days remained, just as the Zoroastrians believed. The miraculous and wondrous appearance of Jesus before His disciples was preached most vigorously by Paul. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul declares emphatically that the whole of the Christian religion depends upon the miraculous resurrection and re-appearance of Jesus. Although Paul said the spiritual body of the risen dead is not the same as flesh and blood body (1 Cor., xv.), still that important point is generally overlooked, and the result is the belief which we find amongst some of the Christian sects; that at the call of the angels, the body will rise from the grave and the mouldering dust of bones and flesh will be put together by the miraculous power of the Almighty God. Paul says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor., xv. 20). He preached that Christ was the first born from the dead, that those who believe in Christ would rise as He did and that those who would not believe in Him nor in His resurrection should not rise.

We have already noticed that the Parsees believed in a miraculous resurrection; that the same miracle became more definite in the case of Jesus; and that

the Christian faith was afterwards founded upon that miraculous event. Both the Parsees and the followers of Christ did not mean by resurrection any universal law, but a miracle done by certain supernatural powers. They did not give any scientific reasons for such a miracle.

But modern science denies miracles. It teaches that this universe is guided, not by miracles as the old thinkers used to believe, but by definite laws which are always consistent and universal. There cannot be any exception to those laws which are uniform throughout. If resurrection be one of those laws, then it must have existed before the birth of Jesus; as such, how could He be the first born from the dead, as described by Paul. Conversely, if Jesus was the first who rose from the dead, then resurrection cannot be a universal law. Scientists would not believe in anything which is not based upon universal laws. Some of the agnostics and materialists have gone so far as to say that Jesus did not die on the cross, but his animation was suspended when his body was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathæa. When Joseph went to Pilate and craved the body of Jesus, Pilate marvelled if He were dead (Mark xv., 44), because it was only six hours after the crucifixion. Some of the modern physiologists are of opinion that temperate and strong men might live for several days on the cross. These heretical agnostics and skeptical scientists say that the body of Jesus revived after a few hours in the

cool, rock-cut tomb, that he walked out of the tomb, went to Galilee and appeared before his disciples.* Whatever the facts may be (nobody can now tell exactly what actually happened), it is clear that the scientists are not ready to take anything upon authority. They do not care to believe in anything because it is written in this book or that. They must have convincing proofs and rational explanation of every phenomenon of nature. They want to penetrate into miracles in order to discover the universal laws that govern them. If they do not find any such laws, they will surely reject every event that is supposed to be caused by miraculous or supernatural powers.

The theory of a miraculous resurrection is attended with the belief that the individual soul does not exist before birth. The supporters of this theory hold that at the time of birth, the individual, being created out of nothing, comes fresh into existence. But science tells us that sudden creation out of nothing and a total destruction of anything are both impossible. Matter and force are indestructible. Science teaches evolution and not creation, and denies the intervention of any supernatural being as the cause of phenomenal changes. The theory of Resurrection ignores all these ultimate conclusions of modern science. On the contrary, the doctrine of Reincarnation, after accepting all the truths and laws of nature that have been discovered by modern science,

*Vide "Science and Christian Tradition," by Prof. Huxley, pp. 279-280.

carries them to their proper logical conclusions. Reincarnation is based upon evolution. It means a continuous evolution of an individual germ of life, and a gradual re-manifestation of all the powers and forces that exist in it potentially. Moreover, the doctrine of Reincarnation is founded on the law of cause and effect. It teaches that the cause is not outside of the effect, but lies in the effect. The cause is the potential or unmanifested state of the effect, and effect is the actual or manifested cause. There is one current of infinite force or power constantly flowing in the ocean of reality of the universe, and appearing in the innumerable forms of waves. We call one set of waves the cause of another set, but in fact that which is the cause is the potentiality of the future effect and the actuality of a previous potential cause. The underlying current is one and the same throughout. Reincarnation denies the idea that the soul has come into existence all of a sudden or has been created for the first time, but it holds that it has been existing from the beginningless past, and will exist all through eternity. The individual soul enjoys or suffers according to the acts it performs. All enjoyment and suffering are but the reactions of our actions. Actions are the causes and the reactions are the results. Our present life is the result of our past actions, and our future will be the result of the present. The actions which we are now doing will not be lost. Do you think that the thought-forces of one life-time will end

suddenly after death? No. They will be conserved and remain potentially in the center and re-manifest under suitable conditions. Each human soul is nothing but a center of thought-force. This center is called in Sanskrit *Sūkshma Sarira* or the subtle body of an individual. The subtle germ of life or, in other words, the invisible center of thought-forces, will manufacture a physical vehicle for expressing the latent powers that are ready for manifestation. This process will continue until the germ can express most perfectly all the powers that are coiled up in its invisible form. As the doctrine of Reincarnation is in agreement with all the physical laws, so it is based upon psychical, moral and ethical laws. As on the objective plane the law of action and reaction governs the objective phenomena, so on the subjective plane of consciousness, if the mental action or thought be good, the reaction will be good, and the reaction will be evil if the mental action be evil, because every action produces a similar reaction. A good reaction is one which makes us happy and brings pleasant sensations or peace of mind, while an evil reaction brings suffering, unpleasant sensations, and makes one miserable. Thus Reincarnation makes us free agents for action, as well as for reaping the results or reactions of those actions. In fact, we mould our own nature, according to our desires, tendencies and works.

The theory of Resurrection, as commonly understood, does not explain why one man is born with a

sinful nature and another with a virtuous one. It contents itself with saying as Luther said: "Man is a beast of burden who only moves as his rider orders; sometimes God rides him and sometimes Satan." But why God should allow Satan to ride His own creature nobody can tell. At any rate, man must suffer eternally for the crimes which he is forced by Satan to commit. Moreover this theory pre-supposes predestination and that the individual soul is foredoomed to go either to heaven or to hell. St. Augustine first started this doctrine of Predestination and Grace to explain why one is born sinful and another sinless. According to this theory, God, the merciful, favors somebody with His grace at the time of his birth and then he comes into this world ready to be saved, but the mass of humanity is born sinful and destined for eternal damnation. Very few indeed receive the gift of grace and are predestined to be saved. Moreover, this doctrine tells us that God creates man out of nothing, forbids him something, but at the same time He does not give him the power to obey His commands. Ultimately God punishes him with eternal torture on account of his weakness. The body and soul will not be separated. He will not be set free from his body, because, if it be so, there will be the end of his suffering, which God does not like. All these sufferings and punishments are predestined before his birth. Thus, St. Augustine's dogma of Predestination and Grace instead of explaining the difficulty satisfactorily

brings horror and dread to human minds, while the doctrine of Reincarnation teaches gradual progress from lower to higher, through ages until the individual reaches perfection. It holds that each individual will become perfect like Jesus or Buddha or like the Father in heaven and manifest divinity either in this life or in some other. One span of life is too short for developing one's powers into perfection. If you should try to train an idiot to become a great artist or a philosopher, would you ever succeed in your attempt to make him so during his life time? No. And will you punish him because he cannot become so? Can a man who possesses the slightest common sense be so unreasonable? Similarly what would you think if God punishes a man because he can not become perfect within a life time? It is a poor argument to say that God has given us free-will to choose right and wrong, and we are responsible for our choice; if we choose wrongly we must be punished. The advocates of such an argument forget that at the same time God has let loose His powerful Satan to corrupt His creatures.

It reminds me of an old story. Once on a time at a certain place a prisoner was released and set free through the kindness of a tyrant. The tyrant said to the prisoner "Look here, wicked man, I give you freedom, you can go to any place; but there is one condition; if you are attacked by any wild animal you will be put to the dungeon and there will be no end to your torture." So saying he gave him

freedom, but at the same time ordered his servants to let loose a hungry wolf to chase the man. You can imagine what became of the prisoner. Can we call this an act of mercy!

The doctrine of Reincarnation says that each individual soul is potentially perfect and is gradually unfolding its powers and making them actual through the process of Evolution. At every step of that process it is gaining different experiences which last only for a time. Therefore neither God nor Satan is responsible for our good or evil actions. Good and evil are like the up and down or the crest and hollow of a wave in the sea. A wave cannot rise without making a hollow somewhere in the sea. So in the infinite ocean of reality innumerable waves are constantly rising. The summit of each wave is called good, while the hollow beside it is evil or misery and the current of each individual life is constantly flowing towards the ultimate destination which we call perfection. Who can tell how long it will take to reach that goal? If anybody can attain to perfection in this life, he is no longer bound to reincarnate. If he fails he will continue to progress by taking some other body. Reincarnation does not teach, as many people think, that in the next incarnation one will begin from the very beginning, but it says that one will start from that point where one arrives before death and will keep the thread of progress unbroken. It does not teach that we go back to animal bodies after death, but that we get our

bodies according to our desires, tendencies and powers. If any person has no desire to come back to this world or to any other and does not want to enjoy any particular object of pleasure, and if he is perfectly free from selfishness that person will not have to come back. The theory of Reincarnation is logical and satisfactory. While the theory of Resurrection is neither based on scientific truths nor can it logically explain the cause of life and death; Reincarnation solves all the problems of life and explains scientifically all the questions and doubts that arise in the human mind.

“Reincarnation is not easily understood by a thoughtless child deluded by the delusion of wealth, name or fame. Everything ends with death, he thinks, and thus falls again and again under the sway of death.”

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